AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. **(Withdrawn)** A composite biomaterial for preventing surgical adhesions of tissue comprised of at least one hyaluronic acid derivative selected from the group consisting of:

(a) a benzyl ester of hyaluronic acid wherein 75 to 100% of the carboxyl groups of hyaluronic acid are esterified with a benzyl radical and up to 25% of the carboxyl groups are esterified with the alkyl radial of a C_{10} to C_{20} aliphatic alcohol, with the proviso that at least 80% of the carboxyl groups are esterified; and

(b) an auto-crosslinked derivative of hyaluronic acid wherein 0.5 to 20% of the carboxyl group of hyaluronic acid are cross-linked to the hydroxyl group of the same or different hyaluronic acid molecule.

2. **(Withdrawn)** The composite biomaterial according to claim 1, wherein said derivative is the total benzyl ester in which all of the carboxyl groups of hyaluronic acid are esterified with a benzyl group.

3. **(Withdrawn)** The composite biomaterial according to claim 1, wherein said derivative is a benzyl ester wherein 80% of the carboxyl groups are esterified with a benzyl group.

4. **(Withdrawn)** The composite material according to claim 1, wherein said derivative is a benzyl ester wherein 75% of the carboxyl groups are esterified with a benzyl group and the remaining 25% carboxyl groups are esterified with the aliphatic residue of a C_{10-20} aliphatic alcohol.

5. **(Withdrawn)** The composite material according to claim 4, wherein said alcohol is stearyl or palmitic alcohol.

6. **(Withdrawn)** The composite material according to claim 1, wherein said auto-crosslinked derivative has 4.5 to 5.0% of the carboxyl groups of the hyaluronic acid molecule cross-linked.

7. **(Withdrawn)** The composite material according to claim 1 which further comprises a non-biodegradable synthetic polymer.

8. **(Withdrawn)** The composite material according to claim 7, wherein said synthetic polymer is a member selected from the group consisting of polypropylene, polyethylene, polyester and polytetrafluoroethylene.

9. **(Withdrawn)** The composite material according to claim 1 in the form of a membrane, a mesh or a woven or non-woven tissue.

10. **(Withdrawn)** The composite biomaterial according to claim 1 in the form of a gel.

11. **(Currently Amended)** A method for preventing surgical adhesions of tissue which comprises applying to tissue involved in surgery a biomaterial comprised of at least one hyaluronic acid derivative ~~related~~ selected from the group consisting of:

(a) a benzyl ester of hyaluronic acid wherein 75 to 100% of the carboxyl groups of hyaluronic acid are esterified with a benzyl radical and up to 25% of the carboxyl groups are esterified with the alkyl radical of a C_{10} to C_{20} aliphatic alcohol, with the proviso that at least 80% of the carboxyl groups are esterified; and

(b) an auto-crosslinked derivative of hyaluronic acid wherein 0.5 to 20% of the carboxyl group of hyaluronic acid are cross-linked to the hydroxyl group of the same or different hyaluronic acid molecule.

12. **(Withdrawn)** The method according to claim 11, wherein said derivative is the total benzyl ester in which all of the carboxyl groups of hyaluronic acid are esterified with a benzyl group.

13. **(Withdrawn)** The method according to claim 11, wherein said derivative is a benzyl ester wherein 80% of the carboxyl groups are esterified with a benzyl group.

14. **(Withdrawn)** The method according to claim 11, wherein said derivative is a benzyl ester wherein 75% of the carboxyl groups are esterified with a benzyl group and the remaining 25% carboxyl groups are esterified with the aliphatic residue of a C_{10-20} aliphatic alcohol.

15. **(Withdrawn)** The method according to claim 14, wherein said alcohol is stearyl or palmitic alcohol.

16. **(Currently Amended)** The method according to claim 11, wherein ~~said auto-crosslinked derivative has~~ 4.5 to 5.0% of the carboxyl groups of said auto-crosslinked derivative has ~~the hyaluronic acid molecule~~ are cross-linked.

17. **(Currently Amended)** The method according to claim ~~20~~11 wherein said biomaterial further comprises a non-biodegradable synthetic polymer.

18. **(Currently Amended)** The method according to claim 17, wherein said synthetic polymer is at least ~~one~~a member selected from the group consisting of polypropylene, polyethylene, polyester and polytetrafluoroethylene.

19. **(Original)** The method according to claim 11, wherein said biomaterial is in the form of a membrane, a mesh or a woven or non-woven tissue.

20. **(Withdrawn)** The biomaterial of Claim 1 further comprising a biologically active agent.

21. **(Withdrawn)** The biomaterial of claim 20 wherein the biologically active agent is selected from the group consisting of steroidal and non-steroidal antiinflammatories, fibrinolytics, hemostatics, antithrombotics, growth factors, antitumorals, antibacterials, antivirals and antifungals.

22. **(Withdrawn)** The biomaterial of claim 10 wherein the viscosity of said gel is at least 200 Pa^{*} Sec^{-1}.

23. **(Withdrawn)** The biomaterail of claim 10 wherein the viscosity of said gel is at least 300 Pa^{*} Sec^{-1}.

24. **(Original)** The method of claim 11 wherein said surgery is selected from the group consisting of abdominal, laparoscopic , laparotomic, intestinal, gynecologic, abdominalpelvic, peritoneal, urogenital, orthopedic, spinal/dura mater, tendon/nerve, including carpal tunnel, cardiovascular, thoracic, ophtalmic, oncologic, plastic, esthetic, ENT, paranasal sinuses, and transplantation.